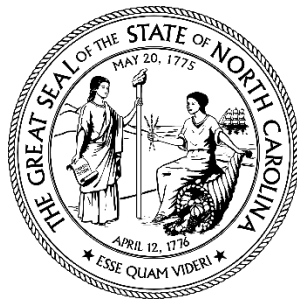


Recognizing a Valuable Resource: How to Establish Women's Commissions in North Carolina



N.C. Council for Women and Youth Involvement
2017

Introduction

"I wonder whether, in our society, women have the chance to use their powers, their full powers, intellectual powers, emotional powers, and all the rest, along the lines of excellence."

-John F. Kennedy, 1963

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy formed the Presidential Commission on the Status of Women. He charged Chairwoman Eleanor Roosevelt the duty of evaluating the economic and social status of women in the United States. Through extensive research, a publication was developed titled *The Presidential Report on American Women*. This publication raised awareness about the inequalities between women and men. Some of these inequalities included discrimination and sexism amongst political, legal and civil involvement.

Following the dissolution of the Presidential Commission in 1963, The National Association of Commissions for Women (NACW) was created to take its place. Although the NACW serves as a resource for roughly 220 state, county and city commissions throughout the United States, President Kennedy posed many questions that need to be answered before forming a commission. "How do women use their different powers to achieve excellence in the community? Are their structures which prevent women from exercising this power?" Being able to answer these questions will help determine where the commission is needed most and what role it will have in the community.

- Excerpt from Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women: Handbook for
Developing Women's Commissions

Key Steps for Creating a Women's Commission in North Carolina

Decide what level of government will be the most appropriate platform for the causes to be addressed by the commission. Commissions can be established at the city, county and state level.

1

Select and educate your commissioners. Identify mechanisms to receive applications from women who want to serve.

2

Create the structure of the commission. Establish bylaws, appoint officers, identify staff, interns and volunteers, and assign committees.

3

Create a budget and secure funding. Consider the following costs when deciding how to distribute the commission's funding: salary, travel reimbursement, special events, administrative support, and office supplies.

4

Develop an annual calendar. Establish and promote meeting days for the year. Include Women's History Month, Equal Pay Day, International Women's Day awareness campaigns.

5

Promote your commission. Ideas include: spearheading a public relations campaign, distributing print media, creating a website and updating social media platforms.

6

Host events. Ideas include: fundraisers, honoree presentations, awareness events, forums, and conferences/symposiums.

7

Evaluate the commission. Report annually to the city, county or state commission.

8

Prepared by N.C. Council for Women and Youth Involvement
Steps referenced from: Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women
Handbook for Developing Women's Commissions, July 2012

<http://www.mass.gov/women/docs/reports-and-resources/handbook-for-developing-a-womens-commission-2012-edition.pdf>

N.C. Council for Women and Youth Involvement

The N.C. Council for Women and Youth Involvement's mission is to advise the Governor, the North Carolina legislature and state departments on the issues impacting women and youth in North Carolina by:

- Raising awareness of the impact of violence against women and directing available resources to serve victims in communities across the state
- Collecting and distributing information about the status of women in North Carolina.
- Acting as a resource for local and regional councils/commissions for women
- Collaborating with other groups and individuals working on behalf of women
- Assuring that necessary services, policies and programs are provided to those in need and strengthening existing programs.
- Reviewing applications, awarding grants and monitoring programs providing self-sufficiency development for women and families in transition.
- Enhancing the quality of the lives of children and youth through leadership development and experiential education

Methodology

This resource on Women's Commissions in North Carolina was created by:

- Referencing the *Handbook for Developing Women's Commissions* by the Massachusetts Commission on the Status of Women; and by
- Conducting interviews with the Women's Commissions that currently exist in North Carolina.

History of Women's Commissions in North Carolina

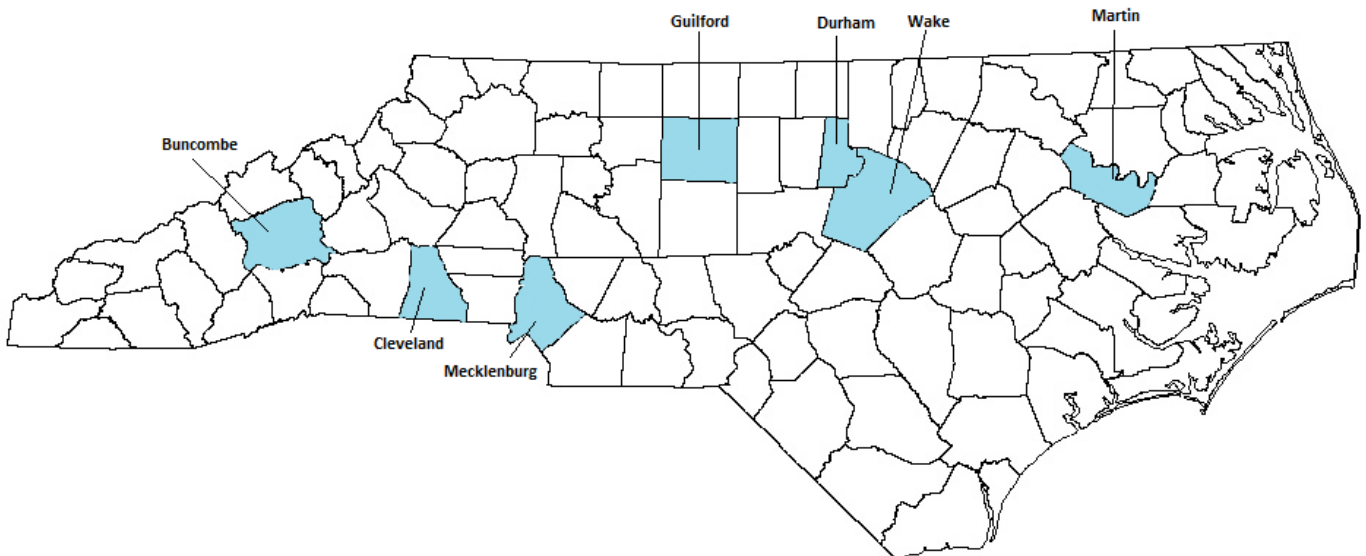
The N.C. Council for Women and Youth Involvement was established in 1963. In 1974, there was a push for local women's councils in North Carolina. The purpose of the county councils on the status of women "is to serve as a county resource center for women...to conduct studies and gather data and identify the status of women, furnish sources of assistance, and initiate and promote programs designed to serve the needs of women."¹

In 1976, there were 25 county councils and two city commissions across the state. By 1977, this number grew to 49 county councils and one mayor's commission. Over the years, the number of councils has decreased to approximately seven.

The seven counties that currently have a Women's Commission in North Carolina include:

1. Buncombe
2. Cleveland
3. Durham
4. Guilford/Greensboro
5. Martin
6. Mecklenburg
7. Wake

Figure 1: Map of Women's Commissions Highlighted by County in North Carolina



¹ Forging Progress for Women: North Carolina Council for Women. A Brief History of Three Decades of Service 1963-1993.

Buncombe County Women's Commission

Chair: Mindy Wudarsky

Mission Statement

The Women's Commission of Buncombe County advises the Board of Commissioners on key issues relating to the social and economic conditions of women in Buncombe County.



History

The Buncombe County Women's Commission was started by the Buncombe County Commissioners when it was chaired by Curtis Ratcliff in 1984. It was originally called Buncombe County Women's Involvement Council, but the name was changed to the Women's Commission in 1999. Many familiar influential women have served on the Women's Commission – several who later became Buncombe County judges (such as Sharon Barrett, Patricia Young, and Susan Dotson-Smith) or became a County Commissioner (such as Doris Giezantanner) or became active on a state-wide basis (such as Betty Budd, who became the statewide Director of NC Council of Women) or became a leader in national women's organizations (such as Dorothea Alderfer who was the southeast regional District Governor of Altrusa International).

Cleveland County Commission for Women

Chair: Betsy Wells

Co-Chairperson: Diane Davis

Mission Statement

Increases public awareness and understanding of the problems, needs and abilities of women in Cleveland County

History

The Cleveland County Council on the Status of Women was established in 1978. The name was changed to the Commission for Women in the 1980s. In the early 1980s, the Commission formally established the Abuse Prevention Council for victims of domestic violence. The organization later became independent of the Commission. Also, in the 1980s, the Commission members asked for and received funding from the County Commissioners. In 1992, the Commission conducted a county-wide survey of the needs of Cleveland County women. In the 1980s and 1990s, the Commission established a Women's Resource Center to be a source of information and help to women throughout Cleveland County.



(Chairperson, Betsy Wells, receiving award from Interim Executive Director Mary Williams-Stover and Intern Kendra Underwood)

Cleveland County Commission for Women

<http://www.clevelandcounty.com/ccmain/boards-and-committees.htm>

Durham County Women's Commission

Chair: Zion Tankard

Vice Chair: Davida Major

Mission Statement

This Women's Commission strives to educate the community and advise the Durham County Board of Commissioners as necessary on issues relating to the changing social and economic conditions of women in the County.

The Commission develops information systems, provides advice, conducts research, hosts educational programming, analyzes policy and advocates for women's issues to improve the lives of and opportunities for all women in Durham.

History

The Durham County Women's Commission was established on February 2nd, 1987.



(Chairperson, Zion Tankard, receiving award from Interim Executive Director Mary Williams-Stover and Intern Kendra Underwood)

Guilford County: Commission on the Status of Women

Chair: Deborah Goddard

Vice-Chair: Nancy Jimmerson

Mission Statement

The mission of the Commission on the Status of Women is to improve the quality of life for women in Greensboro.

History

The Commission on the Status of Women was organized by the League of Women Voters of the Triad, the Greensboro Business and Professional Women, the Greensboro YWCA, Guilford County Republican Women and Guilford County Democratic Women. A steering committee of Jeannie Parker, Dr. Margaret Hunt, Eula Hudgens, Robert Barringer, Jr., Phillip Coe and Jean Eason met and on April 27, 1972, City Council member Mary Seymour introduced a resolution to the City Council on the committee's behalf. In 1973, the Greensboro Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) was established. The CSW celebrated 40 years of work towards its mission to improve the quality of life for women in Greensboro in 2010.



(Chairperson, Deborah Goddard, receiving award from Interim Executive Director Mary Williams-Stover and Intern Kendra Underwood)

Martin County Women's Council

Chair: Deborah Teel

History:

Martin County Women's Council was established in the 1970's, and commissioned by the County to advocate on behalf of issues concerning women within Martin County.



(Chairperson, Deborah Teel, receiving award from Interim Executive Director Mary Williams-Stover)

Mecklenburg County Women's Advisory Board

Chair: Linda Webb

Vice Chair: Linda Carr

Mission Statement

The Mecklenburg County Women's Advisory Board's mission is to identify periodically the status of women in Mecklenburg County; to recommend ways to work toward the betterment of the status of women in education, employment, family, community, health, law, finance, and social services; to work collaboratively with other organizations; and to provide community leadership opportunities by initiating and promoting programs designed to serve the needs of women.

History

The Mecklenburg County Women's Advisory Board was created in 2009 after an advisory Committee reorganization was approved by the Board of County Commissioners. The Women's Advisory Board replaced the former Women's Commission Advisory Board. It is the official citizen's advisory commission on women's issues. The members are appointed by and report to the Board of County Commissioners. The Women's Advisory Board is housed at and receives staff support from the Mecklenburg County Community Support Services.



(Commission member, Kimberly Caldwell receiving award from Interim Executive Director Mary Williams-Stover)

Wake County Commission for Women

Chair: Septina Florimonte

Vice Chair: Amy Richardson

Mission Statement

The mission of the Wake County Commission for Women is to act as an advocate for women and as a resource of information on the status of women in Wake County to the Wake County Board of Commissioners by:

- Identifying and assessing needs of Wake County women
- Cooperating with groups and individuals involved in activities on the status of women
- Providing information to the Wake County Board of Commissioners on issues of high interest to women in Wake County for consideration of public support, or program funding, and/or passage of laws.



(Chairperson, Septina Florimonte, receiving award from Interim Executive Director Mary Williams-Stover and Intern Kendra Underwood)

History

A "Mentor of Distinction" Award received by the Wake County Commission for Women (WCCW) from the Women's Business and Professions Advisory Council is a testament to the concerns and accomplishments of the WCCW. The WCCW owes its beginnings to former Wake County Commissioner Merrie Hedrick, who, while working to get the County to establish a Historical Preservation Committee, discovered that the state had in place legislation allowing each county to organize a Commission for Women. Realizing that Wake County had not organized such a group, she contacted the NC Council for Women and with the assistance of Juanita Bryant, Director of the NC Council, and other council members, she proceeded to outline plans for the organization and operation of a Wake County Commission for Women. On August 29, 1994, the commission was created by the Wake County Board of Commissioners in a resolution signed by Vernon Malone, Chairman of the Board.

Challenges faced by North Carolina Women's Commissions

While the seven remaining commissions are robust, they are faced with challenges that are hindering the growth of their commissions and, most importantly, their communities. Some challenges include:

- Maintaining attendance/membership
- Managing time for active participation within the commission
- Raising awareness
- Sustaining the commission/Gaining financial support



(Left to Right: Amy Richardson, Zion Tankard, Kimberly Caldwell, Deborah West, Deborah Goddard, Betsy Wells, Deborah Teel)

Annual Events, Awards and Research led by N.C. Women's Commissions

Buncombe County Women's Commission

- Buncombe Co. Women's Report
- Women's Agenda Assembly
- Women's Equality Day Event

Cleveland Co. Women's Commission

- Cleveland County Beauty Pageant
- Distinguished Women's Banquet

Durham Co. Women's Commission

- Cities for CEDAW
- Women NC: from Local to Global
- Women's Commission Brunch
- Women's Health and Awareness Day at NCCU

Greensboro Commission on the Status of Women

- Women of Achievement events
- Women's Equality Day celebrations
- Sponsored legislative Agenda Assemblies
- Published newsletters

Martin Co. Women's Council

- Distinguished Woman of the Year Award
- Martin Co. Women's Council Expo

Mecklenburg Women's Advisory Board

- Women's Equality Day Event

Wake Co. Commission for Women

- Dress for Success (Cover letter and Resume building workshop)
- Status of Employment for Women of Wake Co. Report
- WISE (Women in Stem Event)

N.C. Council for Women & Youth Involvement Recognizes Women Commission Leaders in North Carolina

“Our History, Our Strength”

Raleigh, N.C.: In honor of Women’s History Month, the N.C. Council for Women & Youth Involvement recognized six influential leaders in North Carolina at the Recognition of Women Commissions Luncheon. The award recipients were selected based on their outstanding leadership and service to their community and state.

These women included: Amy Richardson of Wake County Commission for Women; Betsy Wells of Cleveland Co. Women’s Commission; Deborah Goddard of the Status of Women Commission in Greensboro; Deborah Teel of Martin Co. Women’s Commission; Kimberley Caldwell of Mecklenburg Women’s Advisory Board; and Zion Tankard of Durham Co. Women’s Commission.

The event was moderated by Council for Women Advisory Board Chairperson Deborah West. Deborah asked a variety of questions focusing on creating, sustaining and gaining membership of women commissions. Many responses from the panelist centered around building relations with county or city commissioners, being responsible, accountable and visible in your community, and striving to stay relevant around women’s concerns. The objective of the luncheon was to bring awareness to and start the ongoing process of inaugurating more women’s commissions in North Carolina.

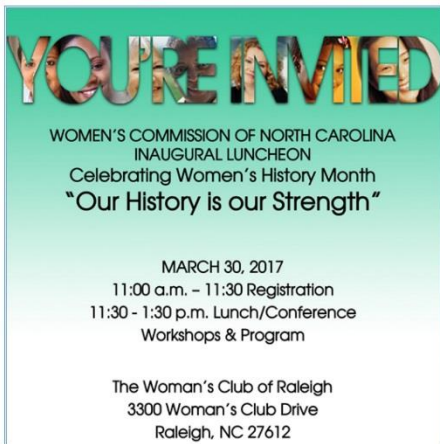


(Left to Right: Amy Richardson, Zion Tankard, Kimberley Caldwell, Moderator Deborah West, Deborah Goddard, Betsy Wells, Deborah Teel)

Highlights

“These commissions are made possible by great dedication and leadership. Our state prospers because of the intellectual power, strength, and resilience of women in our past and women today.”

-Secretary Machel Sanders



Evaluation Results from Women's Commission Luncheon

- 95% of guests 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that the luncheon on March 30th increased their awareness and recognition of women's commissions in North Carolina, and provided networking opportunities and collaboration among women advocates with the CFW Board.
- 80% of guests 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that the luncheon increased their knowledge of the NC CFW/YI resources such as research, program and board development, youth involvement and grants for domestic violence, human trafficking and sexual assault services in North Carolina.
- Following the luncheon, 96% of participants strongly agreed/agreed that they would be able to discuss with others the impact of women's commissions in North Carolina.
- 72% of participants said they would promote CEDAW (Convention for Ending Discrimination Against Women).

Resources

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Buncombe County Women's Commission
<https://www.buncombecounty.org/governing/commissioners/boards-commissions.aspx>

Cleveland County Commission for Women
<http://www.clevelandcounty.com/ccmain/boards-and-committees.htm>

Durham County Women's Commission
<http://dconc.gov/government/departments-a-e/board-of-commissioners/boards-and-commissions/women-s-commission>

Guilford County's Commission on the Status of Women
<http://www.greensboro-nc.gov/index.aspx?page=730>

Mecklenburg County Women's Advisory Board
<http://charmec.org/mecklenburg/county/CommunitySupportServices/WomensCommission/About-Us/Advisory-Board/Pages/default.aspx>

Wake County Commission for Women
<http://www.wakegov.com/womenscommission/Pages/default.aspx>



"We cannot succeed when half of us are held back. We call upon our sisters around the world to be brave, to embrace the strength within themselves and realize their full potential."

-Malala Yousafzai